



Billing Code: 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XA626

Marine Mammals; File No. 16111

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given John Calambokidis, Cascadia Research Collective, Waterstreet Building, 218 ½ West Fourth Avenue, Olympia, WA 89501, has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on marine mammals.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or e-mail comments must be received on or before [insert date 30 days after date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting “Records Open for Public Comment” from the Features box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 16111 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the following offices: See SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.

Written comments on these applications should be submitted to the Chief, Permits, and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301)713-0376, or by email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please include the File No. in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Carrie Hubbard or Laura Morse at (301)427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222-226).

Mr. John Calambokidis requests a five-year permit to study cetaceans and pinnipeds in the eastern North Pacific, from Central America to Alaska. The research is a continuation of long-term studies designed to examine marine mammal abundance, distribution, population structure, habitat use, social structure, movement patterns, diving behavior, and diet. The proposed project would also assess the impact of human activities such as ship strikes, noise exposure, contaminants, and fishery interactions on marine mammals. Focal species are blue (Balaenoptera musculus), fin (B. physalus), humpback (Megaptera novaeangliae), eastern gray (Eschrichtius robustus), sperm (Physeter macrocephalus), and beaked (Mesoplodon spp.) whales. An additional 15 cetacean species and five pinniped species would also be studied, including the endangered sei whale (B. borealis), endangered Southern Resident stock of killer whales (Orcinus orca), and the threatened eastern stock of Steller sea lions (Eumetopias jubatus). Aerial surveys would be conducted to study abundance and distribution, and to track tagged animals.

Ground surveys would consist of population counts and scat collection to study harbor seals (Phoca vitulina) and other pinnipeds at haul-out areas in Puget Sound and throughout Washington. Vessel surveys would include photo-identification, behavioral focal follows, underwater observations and filming, hydroacoustic prey determination, passive acoustic recording, breath sampling, biopsy sampling, collection of sloughed skin, and attachment of suction cup and dart tags. Tags would provide a variety of information such as video images, acoustic recordings, movement data, and physiology information.

A draft environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), to examine whether significant environmental impacts could result from issuance of the proposed scientific research permit. The draft EA is available for review and comment simultaneous with the permit application.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the Federal Register, NMFS is forwarding copies of the application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Documents may be reviewed in the following locations:

Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301)427-8401; fax (301)713-0376;

Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, BIN C15700, Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0700; phone (206)526-6150; fax (206)526-6426;

Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668; phone (907)586-7221; fax (907)586-7249; and

Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213; phone (562)980-4001; fax (562)980-4018.

Dated: March 28, 2012.

Tammy C. Adams, Acting Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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